keeping in Touch
UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES
June 1995

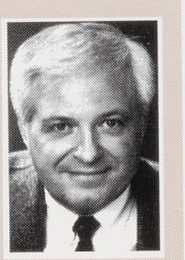
A Bright and Promising Future for Small Churches

COVER STORY

Did you know that most Protestant churches in most areas of the world have an average weekly worship attendance of less than 75? One half of all Metropolitan Community Churches have less than 42 members; eighty percent of all MCC congregations have less than 84 members. Although current trends mark a dramatic increase in larger churches and megachurches, church analyst Lyle Schaller predicts that "small churches have a bright and promising future if they are willing to adapt to a new role in a changing culture." He estimates that by the year 2020 congregations averaging fewer than a hundred at worship will continue to represent forty to fifty percent of all Protestant churches in the United States and Canada.

What defines a church as small? In a recent book, *The Small Membership Church*, Schaller discusses churches with less than 100 in worship. It is true, however, that the term "small" as applied to churches can be relative, depending on the culture or country being considered. Another way of looking at typical small churches in North America is noting the plateaus characteristic of smaller churches. Frequently a plateau occurs at around 40-50 people. This is very much a lay-owned and lay-operated church with strong fellowship characteristics. It usually has difficulty in compensating a fulltime Pastor and often sees itself as a family. The next plateau typically occurs at 85-100 people. This church continues to have strong fellowship characteristics but now has become a community built on a network of one-to-one relationships with the Pastor at the center.

During the past three years twenty-five smaller MCC congregations have grown above the point of an actual or potential numerical plateau. Many more have the desire to do so, and the majority of congregations seeking consultation and assistance through the Strategic Growth Initiative are smaller churches. Building upon the experience of growing churches in the UFMCC and elsewhere, successful models will give both information and inspiration to MCC congregations.



This is the first of a series of three articles on the focus of the Elders' Strategic Growth Initiative led by Rev. Elder Don Eastman, Second Vice Moderator of the UFMCC.

■ Coming next:
Breaking the 200 Barrier
Beyond 400: MCC and Megachurches

Pikes Peak MCC in Colorado Springs, Colorado is a prime example of a smaller church with a powerful vision for its future. Under the leadership of Rev. Nori Rost, Pikes Peak MCC has grown from 39 to 89 members during the past year. Pastor Rost has an immediate goal of moving consistently beyond the 100 mark in worship attendance, but her long-range vision is to see a congregation of 500 in Pikes Peak. More than numbers, she sees a vibrant congregation, rich in diversity, and active in effective ministry through 30-40 face-to-face care groups and multiple ministry programs. Rev. Rost feels that today's core of about 50 committed and enthusiastic members is the greatest strength of Pikes Peak MCC, a strength which she sees as the key to its future.

One of the central purposes of the Strategic Growth Initiative is to help churches like Pikes Peak MCC move beyond a plateau. Helping smaller churches understand their unique strengths, and their potential to attract new members is an important first step in this ministry planning process.

Several smaller MCC congregations will be targeted this year for continuing consultation on strategic planning and leadership development through the Strategic Growth Initiative. The experience in these selected churches will provide valuable insight for all of our smaller Metropolitan Community Churches.

A Strategy for Growth in the Smaller Church

- ☐ **Make** a long-term commitment to pastoral leadership.
- ☐ **Develop** a sense of strong, positive self-image.
- ☐ **Build** upon your strengths.
- ☐ **Meet** an unmet need of those you wish to reach.
- ☐ **Devise** a three-year plan for evangelism/outreach.
- ☐ **Place** priority on new members recruitment.
- ☐ **Create** new face-to-face groups.

Adapted from *The Small Church is Different* by Lyle Schaller

Especially for Small Churches at Conference!

☐ **Breaking the Single Cell Barrier: Growing the Smaller Church** A Workshop with Rev. Arlene Ackerman, District Coordinator, Mid-Atlantic District

JUSTICE

Rev. Mel White

When Troy and the Elders asked me to work with the pastors and people of the UFMCC, I accepted immediately. Though an unpaid position, Gary and I were both convinced that it was God's call. We believe that between now and the next U.S. presidential election, lesbians and gays will suffer a growing wave of intolerance and persecution. During the next eighteen months, we must stand together against all those who would take away our God-given human rights: First, will you help us monitor the radical right at work across the globe? Fax or mail me copies of local newspaper stories that will help us keep track or our victories and our defeats world-wide. Fax 214/875-4858. E-mail RevMel@aol.com

Second, if your congregation is in the U.S., will you lead your congregation in a discussion, and then officially adopt the Marriage Resolution that appears here? If your congregation is outside the U.S., would you send us information on what the marriage laws are in your country?

Troy and I are working closely with Evan Wolfson, Lambda Legal's co-counsel in the Hawaii marriage case. Evan is coordinating the effort to ensure that we will not only win the case, but keep the freedom to marry and to see our unions recognized legally.

The Marriage Resolution: Because marriage is a fundamental right under the U.S. Constitution, and because the Constitution guarantees equal protection of the law; Resolved, the State should permit same-sex couples to marry and share fully and equally in the rights and responsibilities of marriage.

Please try to have your congregation sign on to this resolution very soon. Fax or mail me a copy of the resolution on your church letterhead. We will be presenting our UFMCC endorsements to the media on Pride Sunday in New York City on June 20.

Third, please get your on-line name, or an on-line name of a member of your congregation to me immediately. I will be e-mailing a weekly report to you by way of Internet, and I'd like to add you to our UFMCC network. We will also be using the *Wednesday Lette*r and *Keeping In Touch*.

Fourth, if and when you face a local attempt to legalize discrimination against our brothers and sisters or any other kind of local persecution, fax or mail me the details and I will do my best to help. And contact me anytime with questions or suggestions or rumor control.

Fifth, if your congregation doesn't understand this "doing justice" issue, if they are not convinced that we should respond to attempts to eliminate us, if they see social action as outside our spiritual responsibility, let me know. I will prepare sermon or teaching outlines to help you.

In response to our declaration to make Mothers Day a day of prayer for all lesbian/gay parents, over 200 letters have been forwarded to the Justices of the Supreme Court of the State of Virginia. This is in protest of the court's recent decision to remove three-year-old Tyler from the custody of his mother, Sharon Bottoms, and her life partner April Wade, members of MCC Richmond.

JUNE 1995

Keeping in Touch is a monthly publication of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. We are a church of the lesbian and gay community, open to all. Our mission is to call people to new life through the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ, confront injustice through Christian social action, and create a community of healing and reconciliation. *Keeping in Touch* may be freely copied for distribution in UFMCC. Portions may be reprinted in UFMCC church publications, with attribution. For other distribution, please request permission. Subscriptions are free upon request. Send address changes, news and ideas to: *Keeping in Touch*, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd, #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029; (213) 464-5100. Deadline for each issue: 15th of previous month.

Editorial Board: Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry, Moderator; Mr. Ravi Verma, Director of Administration
Rev. Kittredge Cherry, Editor

Ms. Nancy Fackrell, Typesetting, Norm Mason, Graphic Concept

GENERAL CONFERENCE

Conference is Only Days Away!

Time is rapidly running out before General Conference XVII begins in Atlanta! The deadline for pre-registrations to be received at UFMCC headquarters has been extended until June 22, 1995. To receive the best discount air fares, don't delay any further in making reservations:

Vacation Corporation
12467 Rancho Bernardo Rd, B-1
San Diego, California 92128
(800) 394-5468 (619) 485-9687

Envoy Travel, 740 Rush Street, 609
Chicago, IL 60611
(800) 44-ENVOY (312) 787-2400

GENERAL CONFERENCE

Conference: A Place for Children!

Rev. Barbara Sagat, Coordinator
Conference Childrens Program

This year will be a very special year for children who participate in General Conference! It will be a fun, exciting and educational time for all of the children who attend!

This conference will feature three programs designed and based upon the children's age. These groups will be for pre-school children, elementary aged children and adolescents. All programs will be taught by professional child care workers from within MCC. In addition, infant care will be provided. Programs will focus on a daily theme of relevance for our children with workshops ranging from celebrating our special families, to understanding MCC worship traditions.

Each day will be structured to take advantage of our location. Mornings will be spent exploring our special fellowship. Afternoons will include a variety of recreational activities. In addition, the children will be facilitating and conducting a special worship service all on their own to take place Saturday Morning, July 29th!

We will also be designing T-shirts as a service project for our friends from around the fellowship who were unable to attend conference due to illness or injury to remind them that they are loved and remembered by UFMCC! There will also be a special time for parents and children to celebrate our families together.

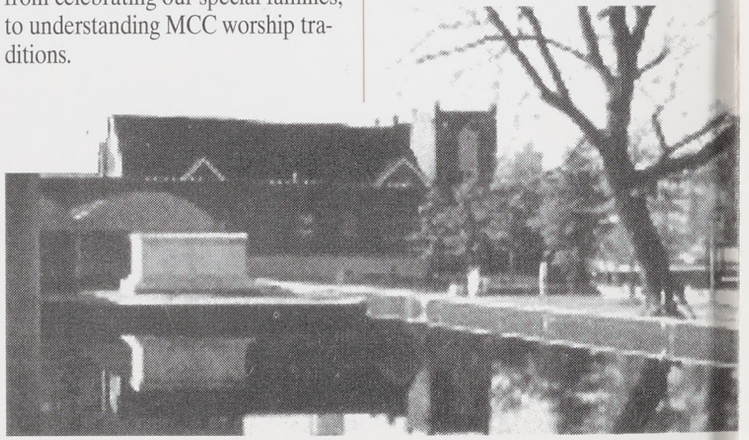
As we continue to expand our horizons it is exciting that we are able to include all of MCC in our vision. Expanding our programming for our children is an exciting part of our expansion and we encourage all of you who have children to allow them to be a part of this special program!

GENERAL CONFERENCE

UFMCC: The Next Generation

Since the birth of the Fellowship in 1968, there has been the birth of an entirely new generation of young people who have grown up in an environment very much changed from that which previous generations experienced. With an increasingly visible gay presence in the world, it has been difficult for

An observance will be held on Saturday afternoon of Conference, July 29, at the nearby Martin Luther King, Jr. Center.



Conference headquarters in Atlanta is the Westin Peachtree Plaza, near shops, restaurants, and entertainment facilities

world, it has been difficult for young people to grow up thinking that they are the "only one." Instead, the world in which young people have been raised has been one filled with images of pride parades and Act-Up protests, anti-gay ballot initiatives and hate crime bills, AIDS and breast cancer. It is a world that at the same time, however, is beginning to offer role models for a healthy and happy homosexual existence.

Now that the denomination is moving into late "twenty-something," it is appropriate that the Fellowship begin seriously giving attention to the young adults who will fill the pulpits and pews in the decades to come. The General Conference of 1993 marked the first occasion in the history of the UFMCC when significant time and energy were devoted to the concerns faced by young adults. At that conference, the Youth Assembly called on the entire body of the General Conference to examine the issue of ageism, and requested that the Conference dedicate more resources to youth programming, work towards an increased understanding of sexual harassment and teen suicide, and allow greater participation of young persons in the life of the denomination.

In response to the Youth Assembly's request in 1993, General Conference XVII will focus greater attention to youth than any previous conference. Through special youth-oriented social events, a heightened role of youth in worship, and a track of workshops during the week, including programming on safer sex issues and input from churches with effective outreaches to young people. The only thing lacking at this point is an abundance of youth! If you are aware of young adults who demonstrate leadership potential and might benefit from the conference experience, encourage them to attend. Registration fees for youth are lower than adult registrations, and registration ends June 15, 1995.

If you have further questions, please contact: Dana Cagle, (213) 464-5100, ext. 222.

GENERAL CONFERENCE

Pastoral Care Volunteers Sought

General Conference is a place of fellowship and celebration. However, for many, it can also be a place of great challenge. A team of pastoral volunteers is needed to provide support and listening for those who need care at General Conference, July 23-30, 1995, in Atlanta, Georgia.

If you have training or expertise in counseling, pastoral care, or peer listening and prayer, please contact Nathan Meckley at UFMCC Offices: 213-464-5100, extension 214.

FLORIDA

New Home for MCC Tampa

Citing a recent increase in membership and attendance, MCC Tampa has purchased a new building which is more than twice the size of its old home.

MCC Tampa's membership has recently reached a record high of 266. The church purchased its old site in 1972 with a membership of nineteen.

Purchase price of the building was $387,000, and the church has launched a capital campaign seeking support from throughout the local community.

BIG OOOOPS . . .

She's Still Singin'

Earlier this year the 1995 UFMCC International Directory was mailed to churches and clergy world-wide. It features a more compact format than past directories.

But in one instance, it was a little too compact. An oversight inadvertently excluded Rev. Delores Berry from the Evangelistic Ministries section of the directory.

Rev. Berry is, indeed, still doing full-time evangelism, based in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. She can be reached at 717/560-1930.

HIV/AIDS

New Prevention Program from AIDS Ministry

UFMCC AIDS Ministry is pleased to announce a new HIV prevention program specifically targeting young gay men, ages 18-25: the Peer Education Program of the Metropolitan Community Churches, or PEP/MCC.

Every local MCC will be sent an inspirational training video, a Trainer's Manual and a Peer Educator's Manual. With these resources, each local church can establish a peer education program for HIV prevention. PEP/MCC is based on the highly successful PEP/LA, founded and directed by Wendy Arnold, M.P.H. PEP/LA and Ms. Arnold have already established PEP's in eight countries beyond the U.S., including Russia, Hungary, and Thailand, which shows that the program is culturally adaptable.

The video has been produced and directed by Alison Arngrim. The manuals have been adapted and revised by Bob Schoonover and Rev. Steve Pieters from the Southern California AIDS Hotline Training manual, and the PEP/LA training manual. The entire project has been supervised and coordinated by Rev. Steve Pieters.

All local MCC's will receive the video and manuals before Conference. Videos will be formatted for international distribution. There will be a Conference workshop to provide further training. Wendy Arnold, Alison Arngrim, Bob Schoonover and Rev. Pieters will be available during the conference for consultation.

Ms. Arnold will be available by phone through the rest of the year, for those who need further assistance in establishing their PEP.

Rev. Elder Troy Perry states in the video, "I want every MCC to have a peer training program... The only effective vaccine against HIV is education... If we don't stop the dying, how are we going to double our size by the year 2001?"

This project is being funded by a grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, through a sub-contract with the U.S. AIDS National Interfaith Network.

WORLD CHURCH EXTENSION

Seeking Spanish Translators

Several Spanish speaking delegates will be attending our General Conference in Atlanta. If you are able to assist with translating at the worship services or any of the business meetings, please contact Rev. Judy Dahl, Administrator of World Church Extension at the UFMCC Headquarters (213) 464-5100, extension 228. Or you may contact Ms. Ana Vargas of MCC Ventura who will lead the Spanish translations this year.

WORLD CHURCH EXTENSION

Calling All Medical Professionals . . .

Rev. Judy Dahl, Administrator
World Church Extension

Calling all doctors, nurses, medical personnel, people with experience in missionary work and those who speak a language other than English. World Church Extension needs you at General Conference!

We each have our own story to tell. And we all know how vital the UFMCC has been in our individual lives, how it has linked us to God and to each other. Ultimately that is what we have to share with the world!

Just this month we have received letters from: A group of 25 gay men and lesbians in Venezuela who want to know more about the UFMCC.

- An ordained Mormon Elder from Spain has been in dialogue with us for quite sometime and he writes this week in hopes of making his connection with us official.

- An ex-Catholic nun in Poland wants to know if there is an MCC she can connect with to blend her lesbian and spiritual life!

"The Word" about UFMCC is out! Now it's up to us to make good on our word. And to help do that, we need you to help us in our Global Outreach!

If you are a medical professional, if you have any previous missionary experience, or if you speak, write or read a language other than English, please attend a Networking Meeting at General Conference at 4 p.m., Sunday, July 23rd in the Flag Room of the Westin Peachtree Plaza. We want to develop an ongoing pool of people who can assist us in spreading this good news!

Come and see what a difference you can personally make in the world!

WOMEN

Third CLOUT U.S. National Gathering

Christian Lesbians Out Together (CLOUT) is excited about their upcoming National Gathering. The theme for this third annual gathering is "CLOUT Our One Foundation: Celebrating our Herstory, Diversity and Ritual". This gathering will be held on August 10-13, 1995, in SUNY, Brockport, New York (west of Rochester).

To register for this Gathering please contact CLOUT, Post Office Box 460808, San Francisco, California 94146; or call (415) 487-5427. Some scholarships are available for those on limited income.

AUSTRALIA

Wondering About Conference "Down Under"?

"How much will it cost?" "How can I most easily arrange travel?" "What will Sydney be like in July?" MCC churches and delegates ask these and many other questions planning for 1997 General Conference in Sydney, Australia. Where do you get the answers? As well as continuing articles in *Keeping in Touch*, the upcoming General Conference in Atlanta is a perfect place.

Above and Beyond Tours and Destination Down Under, the selected travel companies, will have staff and a booth at the Resource Expo. They are, also, raffling two free round-trip airline tickets to Conference in Australia! Stop by and visit Lynne Hocking and Liz Phillips - they are the experts on travel to Sydney and lodging while there. Ask them about the Conference travel package. Also, they have great ideas about making the most of a trip to Australia. And remember to place your name in the drawing for a free airline ticket!

Many delegates from MCC's in Australia will be present and visible in Atlanta: look for their T-shirts and buttons. No one could better describe Australia or MCC in that region. They are, also, the ones to ask about local church plans and anticipation about the Conference in Sydney.

A forum on the 1997 Conference in Australia is sched-

AROUND THE FELLOWSHIP

Praises

Morning Star MCC, Cherry Valley, MA, officially joined the local chapter of the Worchester County Ecumenical Council. **Rev. Ron Anderson**, pastor, was appointed official chaplain of the Gay Officers Action League of New England, an organization of criminal justice system employees. ■ **Rev. Tyrone Sweeting**, pastor of **MCC Boise**, ID, recently received the Maple Award from the Gay and Lesbian Community Center for inspiring achievement in others. ■ **MCC Huntsville**, AL, is pleased to announce the installation of their new pastor, **Rev. Maryanne McPherson** in May 1995. ■ **Rev. Andy Sidden**, pastor of **Spirit of Life MCC** in Holiday, FL, has been elected to the board of directors of PASCO Inc., a non-profit organization that supports people living with AIDS and their families, friends and caregivers in Pasco County, north of Tampa Bay. ■ **Rev. Nori Rost**, pastor of **Pikes Peak MCC**, CO is pregnant. The baby, which is the first for her and her spouse, **Ms. Kim Stephens**, is due on September 23, 1995. ■ Well-planned, smoothly run, informative, fun — these were some of the comments heard during the first Health Fair sponsored by **Joie di Vivre MCC**, Baton Rouge, LA, held in April. Approximately 200 persons attended this unique day-long event, the theme of which was "to present a spectrum of health resources for a rainbow of people."

AROUND THE FELLOWSHIP

Prayers

Prayers are requested for **Rev. Kittredge Cherry**, editor of *Keeping In Touch* and Ecumenical Field Director, who is on disability leave after being diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome. Cards can be sent to her at the Fellowship Office. ■ **Rev. Phil Crum** of **MCC For All The Saints**, Silverlake, CA, was hospitalized recently.

■ **Rev. Lisetta Thomas** on the death of her father, April 11, in El Paso, TX, where the service was also held. ■ **Rev. Janet Parker** in the death of her father in Baton Rouge, LA on April 24.

CHRONICLES

Margaret Mahlman New Controller

Margaret Mahlman has been hired as the UFMCC's Controller. She is a certified public accountant who has been in public accounting practice since 1976. Her expertise has mostly been in the tax area although she does have familiarity with most other aspects of accounting. In addition to Margaret's accounting knowledge she is licensed as a life, health and disability insurance agent, so she brings a knowledge of insurance matters. She also has been involved in writing staff manuals and being involved in developing and administering various employee benefits plans.

In addition to Margaret's financial expertise, she has been involved in churches all her life. Her father is a retired Methodist Minister, she has served on church boards at various positions and is currently a member of the finance committee of Good Samaritan MCC in Whittier. She also has her masters degree in Marriage, Family and Child Counseling and worked as an MFCC intern at both Open Quest in West Hollywood and the AIDS Service Center in Pasadena.

Margaret and her partner Donna Carkeek have just celebrated their sixth anniversary together and live with one of Donna's children, Trevor, in Downey, California. In addition to Trevor, Donna has a son, Seth who lives in Helena, Montana. Margaret has three children: Mike is nineteen and lives in Longview, Washington, where he is attending college; Eric, nineteen, who recently graduated from high school and is moving to Little Rock, Iowa where he will attend a trade school; and Dan, sixteen, who lives with his father in Omak, Washington.

uled for General Conference business on Wednesday, July 26, from 5:15 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. UFMCC staff, travel company representatives, and other individuals will be available to answer questions and share information.

Finally, don't forget to ask your local church clergy and lay delegates. An update on 1997 General Conference is included in the preconference packet of information sent to every clergy and lay delegate registered for the Atlanta Conference. It includes a preliminary schedule, travel information and detailed answers to many other questions.

NEW HEADQUARTERS

Progress in Building Quest

Rev. Troy Perry reports a very impressive response to his call for individuals around the Fellowship to join the group he has named "The 500." Persons willing to pledge $1,000 to the Fellowship's campaign to raise the down payment for its new Global Headquarters building in West Hollywood, California, will gather at a special reception with Rev. Perry at General Conference in Atlanta.

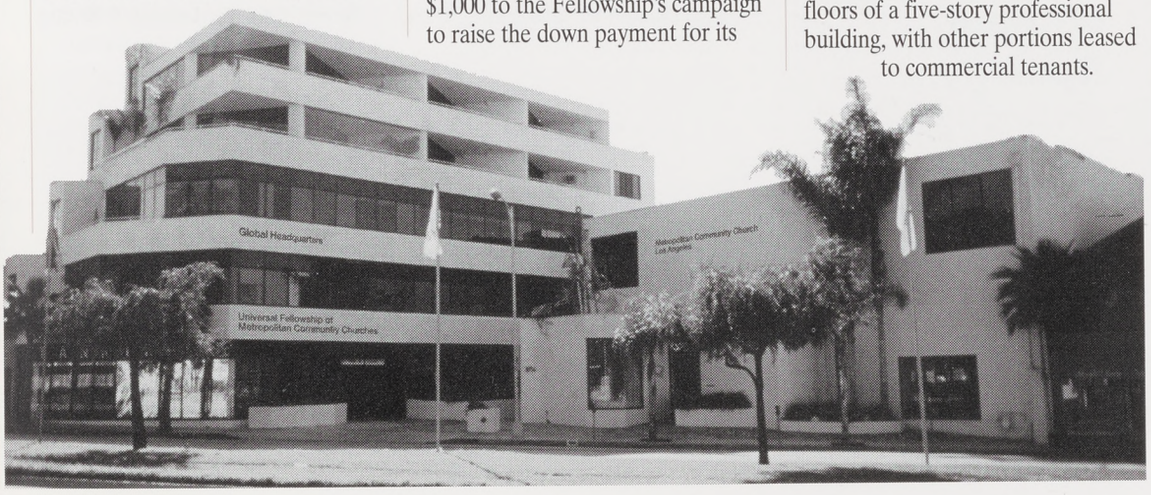
Rev. Perry mailed a personal letter to churches and clergy around the the Fellowship last month, and has been very pleased with the result.

"I believe that I will be able to arrive at General Conference in Atlanta with the down payment in hand. I want to introduce 'The 500' to the Conference as the group who shares my vision of owning our own headquarters building."

Rev. Perry would also like to be in contact with every member of every MCC in the Fellowship, and asks that local pastors share their mailing list with him. "I would love to send a letter to every member of every MCC," said Rev. Perry. Pastors may forward their mailing lists, for confidential use by Rev. Perry, to the Fellowship offices.

Meanwhile, the purchase process is progressing. Inspections are beginning to assess the building's structural integrity and the condition of its mechanical systems. Options for financing are also currently being explored.

The Fellowship has entered into a purchase agreement, in partnership with MCC Los Angeles, to purchase two adjoining commercial structures. The property is located on the most visible portion of Santa Monica Boulevard in the heart of West Hollywood. Fellowship offices will initially be housed on several floors of a five-story professional building, with other portions leased to commercial tenants.


Global Headquarters
Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches
Metropolitan Community Church Los Angeles

CHRONICLES

Top 20 Tithes

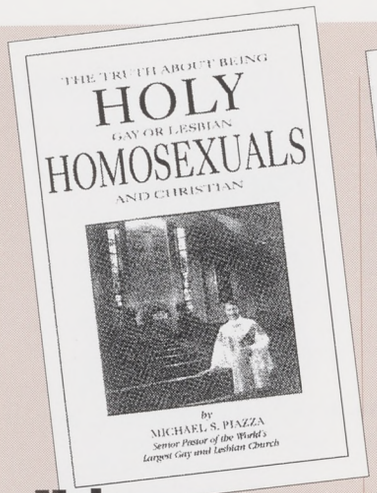
1. Cathedral of Hope MCC, Dallas $8,949.51
2. MCC of the Resurrection, Houston $6,541.64
3. Sunshine Cathedral, Fort Lauderdale $4,563.99
4. MCC Washington, Washington, D.C. $3,618.41
5. MCC Toronto, Toronto $2,729.09
6. St. Luke's MCC, Jacksonville $1,983.44
7. MCC San Francisco, San Francisco $1,670.93
8. MCC New York, New York $1,657.96
9. King of Peace MCC, St. Petersburg $1,623.57
10. Spirit of Hope MCC, Kansas City $1,620.99
11. MCC Richmond, Richmond $1,506.13
12. MCC Tampa, Tampa $1,340.11
13. Joy MCC, Orlanda $1,316.32
14. First MCC of Atlanta, Atlanta $1,289.03
15. Church of Our Savior MCC, Boca Raton $1,282.74
16. All God's Children MCC, Minneapolis $1,170.59
17. Agape MCC, Ft. Worth $1,136.20
18. Harvest MCC, Denton $1,113.67
19. Maranatha Fellowship MCC, Houston $1,031.16
20. Holy Covenant MCC, Hinsdale $937.73

(These figures reflect the 10 percent of each local church's monthly income that is reported to Fellowship headquarters.)

Top 20 Per Capita

1. Maranatha Fellowship MCC, Houston $31.83
2. Holy Covenant MCC, Hinsdale $25.83
3. Faith Eternal MCC, Springfield $24.77
4. Open Arms MCC, Rochester $23.23
5. Harvest MCC, Denton $23.20
6. MCC of the Resurrection, Houston $23.17
7. MCC New Haven, New Haven $22.96
8. New Life MCC, Charlotte $22.43
9. MCC of Greater Hayward, San Lorenzo $19.63
10. St. Luke's MCC, Jacksonville $19.45
11. MCC in Charlottesville, Charlottesville $19.17
12. Gentle Souls MCC, Kansas City $18.78
13. River of Life MCC, Richland $18.27
14. MCC of the Living Faith, St. Louis $18.09
15. MCC Johnson County, Shawnee $18.06
16. MCC With a Vision, Longview $17.93
17. MCC Baltimore, Baltimore $17.80
18. MCC of the Spirit, Harrisburg $17.80
19. MCC Huntsville, Huntsville $17.17
20. Russian River MCC, Guerneville $17.11

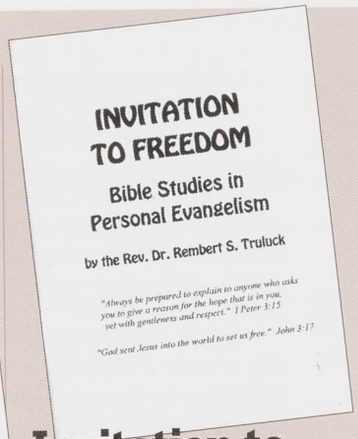
(These figures reflect the average individual weekly offerings to the local church)



Holy Homosexuals: The Truth About Being Gay or Lesbian and Christian

Rev. Michael Piazza
Using his life and those of members of his congregation, Rev. Piazza reveals the untold story of homosexual Christians. Catalog No. BP0074

$8.95 each


INVITATION
TO FREEDOM
Bible Studies in
Personal Evangelism
by the Rev. Dr. Rembert S. Truluck
"Always be prepared to explain to anyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and respect." 1 Peter 3:15
"God sent Jesus into the world to set us free." John 3:17

Invitation to Freedom: Bible Studies in Personal Evangelism

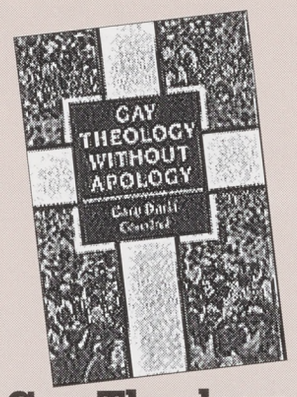
Rev. Dr. Rembert Truluck
Intriguing Bible studies, practical information on how to do personal evangelism. Provocative and useful.
Catalog No. BP0077

$7 each

The Sex Texts: Sexuality, Gender and Relationships in the Bible

By Rev. Robert Arthur
What is sexuality and how dare we mention sexuality and God in the same breath? This book promises to be a catalyst for discussion of a much-needed theology of sexuality.
Catalog No. BP0080

14.95 each



Gay Theology Without Apology

Gary David Comstock
"A case for the richer, more erotic, more just and loving humanness of every one of us." Catalog No. BP0072

$12.95 each

TO ORDER CALL **UFMCC RESOURCE CENTER** 213/464-5100

UFMCC will occupy additional portions of the building as the need for space arises in the future.

MCC Los Angeles will occupy a separate, ajoining two-story structure.

The UFMCC General Council approved the purchase partnership at meetings in April.

HIV/AIDS FEEDBACK

It's How You Feel That Counts, Even at 56 and Sliding

Tom Torrance, Coordinator
Council of Ministries,
MCC Washington, D.C.

What Gets Me Through? Like all other patients with an advanced case of AIDS, I watch very closely my monthly laboratory tests for signs of change. The test I regard as most significant is the one which shows how many virus-fighting CD-4 cells, also called T-cells, appear in a given measure of blood. As one progresses with AIDS, the percentage of virus fighting cells in the blood (compared to all other cells in the blood) merits as much notice as the absolute number.

So when Sara Ann, my case manager at the AIDS program of the National Institutes of Health, called this morning, I listened with keen interest to her report. "Tom, my dear, I have your most recent lab results."

"Good, I have been meaning to call you. Let's have it." She paused, perhaps twice as long as usual. "The absolute number of T-cells is 56 and the percentage is six." Bummer. I winced. "Oh." I couldn't think of anything else to say. Trying to cover my disappointment would have been inappropriate. Expressing it would have been out of character. "You know Tom. He is such a stoic," my mother once remarked to my companion. A new low. And I had only recently come to terms with 100. (a healthy person would have 1000 T-cells).

50 marks another psychological breakpoint. At 50, your T-cells are statistically non-existent. You might as well not have any for all the good 50 can do. Let's face it, if the infection- fighting components of your blood amounts to only six percent of the total, it will be overrun quickly by that other 94 percent. At 50, the game is over. Many people quit taking AZT and other virus fighters at that point. A boatload of AZT won't turn the tide.

It's just a bump in the road, I told myself. Sure. Tell that to your 50 T-cells, Thomas. Ten years ago they had 1000 brothers. Four years ago they still had 500. Two years ago there were 200 of the little devils. And even last year when I teetered between 125 and 150, I was sure that I had reached the lowest plateau. At no point in the long slide did I give up hope that something good would come along to save the day.

Just a few months ago, my T-cells matched my IQ. Now they are approaching my age.

"Just because your T-cells are low you aren't necessarily going to get an opportunistic infection. People can walk around for years with low T-cells. In fact, I have one patient who has zero T-cells. It's how you feel that counts." Well, I

CHRONICLES

Transitions

Rev. Bev Stephenson began her pastorate at **Eglise du Saint Esprit** on Easter Sunday, April 16. ■ **Rev. Nancy Horvath** began as the pastor at **Family of Faith MCC** on May 1. ■ **Rev. Dexter Brecht** has been appointed as the **Samaritan College** Volunteer Education Coordinator for the South Central District. ■ **Rev. Don Clark** has been appointed interim pastor of **All Saints MCC**, Atlanta, GA.

don't feel so well at the moment, thank you. No doubt those who "walk around for years with low T-cells" are incredibly lucky. Without T-cells, one has absolutely no protection from even the most innocuous little cold. It is not like driving around in your car without using your seat belt. It is more like trying to cross a busy intersection without help when you are blind and deaf.

So, what changes now? I will swear for the nth time to take better care of myself. I will vow to slough off anything I identify as stressful. I will be careful about what I eat and diligent in matters of food preparation sanitation. I will ask myself a thousand times each day, "Is this good for me? Or might it kill me?" I still believe in God's grace. I still believe in God's watchcare. I still believe in God's sovereignty. I will continue to build a life that will keep on giving even after I pass from this temporal state into an eternal one.

After all, it's just a bump in the road, not a roadblock. And that is what gets me through.

UPDATE

Trinity MCC Copes with Loss

As a result of storm damage that ripped the roof off its sanctuary and offices on May 5, Trinity MCC in Arlington, Texas has experienced "amazing" assistance from other MCC churches. Rev Jo Crisco told *Keeping in Touch* that "If I listed all the help that we have received from the Fort Worth, Denton, and Dallas congregations, it would take me an hour." Other churches around the fellowship have also been sending money and offers of assistance since the storm.

Trinity lost virtually everything in its building due to water and wind damage. Furniture, files, office equipment, computers, piano, organ and "everything except the altar ware and choir robes is a total loss," according to Rev. Crisco.

Trinity will be meeting at a local motel until repairs are complete, which could take approximately four months. Trinity has also just launched a new building project.

SAMARITAN

Rev. Sandra Robinson

This year Samaritan celebrates 25 years of service to UFMCC. The celebration will be held during our 25th Anniversary Awards Luncheon, featuring a keynote address by Dr. Robert Goss, and recognition of Rev. Richard Ploen, founding Elder of the UFMCC and founder of Samaritan Bible Seminary. The luncheon will be held on Tuesday, July 25 in Atlanta. Tickets are available from Samaritan.

Dr. Goss is currently Samaritan faculty and author of *Jesus Acted Up: A Gay and Lesbian Manifesto*. Dr. Goss will be teaching Sexuality Studies in Samaritan's Dual Enrollment Program at Chicago Theological Seminary this fall. The course will be taught in Chicago through the Association of Theological Schools. Contact Samaritan for more information about this class.

Two Samaritan Trustees have recently published new works. Rev. Marie M. Fortune is the author of *Love Does No Harm, Sexual Ethics for the Rest of Us.* It's described as a guide to ethical decision-making in intimate relationships. Rev. Fortune offers a set of guidelines that can assist people in making sexual choices, including making peer relationships, authentic consent, and sharing of pleasure.

Our Tribe: A Lesbian Ecu-Terrorist Outs the Bible for a Queer Millennium by Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson will be published by HarperCollins later this year.

Mona West, Academic Dean, has been published in *The Mercer Commentary on the Bible*, Mercer University Press, dealing with the books of Ruth, Lamentations, and Song of Songs.

Samaritan will host a theological conference in 1996 that will be an interfaith gathering of lesbian/gay theologians and Biblical scholars. This conference will be a milestone learning experience which will allow a place for critical interfaith collaboration between UFMCC theologians and scholarship from other faiths. It is designed to connect theological studies with the concerns of our churches, and to promote critical and strategic reflection on leadership education in our communities.

We hope this conference will be an "academy of religion" for lesbian/gay theologians and Biblical scholars and is a tremendous opportunity to raise the profile of UFMCC ministry.

Samaritan Pre-Conference Classes are currently open for enrollment. They will be held in Atlanta the week before Conference and include:

- Introduction to Sexuality Studies, taught by Rev. Chris Pasinski and Rev. Nancy Smiegowski, both graduates of Chicago Theological Seminary and licensed UFMCC clergy;
- Preaching, taught by Rev. Glenna Shepherd, Pastor of Christ Covenant MCC in Stone Mountain, Georgia;
- Worship, taught by Rev. Helene Loper, a graduate of Columbia Seminary;
- African Christianity, taught by Elias Farajaje-Jones, Professor of Religion at The Howard University Divinity School.

Deadlines for these classes are very soon, so contact Samaritan at 214/221-7749 for further details and tuition information.

I will be the keynote speaker for the Fifteenth National Gathering of the United Coalition for Lesbian/Gay Concerns banquet on July 1 in Berkeley, California, held in conjunction with the United Church of Christ General Synod. Rev. Troy Perry, UFMCC Founder will be seated at the Synod as a non-voting delegate. The theme of the Synod is "In Christ Strangers No More."

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BOOKS/PUBLICATIONS

FREE! UFMCC Resource Catalog - The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches is offering the new RESOURCE CENTER CATALOG, featuring new Books by MCC authors; new brochures and certificates; new and exciting items; and materials by Gay and Lesbian Christians! Please write or call: UFMCC Catalog, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029; or call (213) 464-5100; fax (213) 464-2123.

MERCHANDISE

One sentence spiritual thoughts for Sunday bulletins and outdoor signs. For 26 Thoughts (no charge) send stamped addressed envelope to: Thought-For-The-Week, Route 1, Box 13-61, High Hill, MO 63350.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Assistant Pastor sought by MCC Washington. Full time position. Person with Christ centered commitment, good interpersonal, administrative skills a must. Send resume with references to: MCC Washington, 474 Ridge St., NW, Washington, DC 20001 by May 30.

Energetic and experienced spiritual leader needed for strong and stable congregation at MCC New Haven. Full time position with excellent compensation package for licensed and ordained pastor. Church has focused mission statement, annual Ministries Plan, committed lay leaders, stable finances, and over 16 years of service to the community. Letters of inquiry should be forwarded to: Pastoral Search Committee, 566 Whalley Ave. #10, New Haven, CT 06511. All inquiries kept confidential.

MCC Pueblo is seeking a part time Senior Pastor who will help us grow to support a full time cleric. Please send resume to MCC of Pueblo, Search Committee, P.O. Box 1918, Pueblo, Colorado 81002.

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